

Imperial College
London

Imperial
Enterprise Lab

WE Innovate

Empowering Women Entrepreneurs

It's 2020 and women are still underrepresented in science, technology and business. Though women work at the forefront of scientific research, it has been proven that they face many barriers, both cultural and financial, when it comes to translating their ideas into businesses. This not only holds women back, it holds innovation back too.

Imagine if these barriers could be overcome. We would have more women in leadership positions, running startups and raising funding. And we would have a huge injection of talent developing new ideas to solve problems and improve society.

At the Imperial Enterprise Lab, our flagship programme for women entrepreneurs is already bringing this vision closer to a reality. In five short years, WE Innovate has supported hundreds of women entrepreneurs and become a leader in this space. But we are not stopping here. With our new programme, WE Accelerate, we are building on our achievements to

offer even more support and opportunities for women entrepreneurs at the times they need it most.

With the right partners, we can increase our impact and help even more women flourish in science, entrepreneurship and innovation.

Tailored support for women founders

Imperial was founded on the idea of translating scientific discovery into societal impact and is renowned for this today. To support this activity, the College offers a full ecosystem of support for innovators and entrepreneurs at every stage of their journey.


Although entrepreneurs are often depicted as outliers, we know that they thrive best with supportive networks to help see them through the difficult process of turning an initial idea into a successful business.

We also know that women founders can face specific challenges. Many express a desire to build confidence and knowledge when it comes to turning an idea into a startup, and to gain access to role-models they identify with. That is why we created **WE Innovate** – Imperial's flagship programme for women entrepreneurs.



Meet Olivia Ahn
Co-Founder of Polipop

A doctor and entrepreneur, Olivia won the WE Innovate prize in 2018 for her business, Polipop. Polipop is tackling the 200,000 tonnes of sanitary product landfill waste every year in the UK with flushable and biodegradable sanitary products. Olivia has since gone on to win the London Mayor's Entrepreneur competition, as well as awards at MSDUK, Exeter Velocities and Techfounders, and was also invited to the World Economic Forum in China.

 [Hear from Olivia in this short video.](#)

Innovation is in our DNA



Named the UK's 'Most Innovative University' by Reuters in 2019



219

Imperial startups launched by students since 2013

£

£85 million
in external investment raised.



WE Accelerate: starting out

The first of its kind in the UK, WE Innovate is a nine-month pre-accelerator programme open to all Imperial students or recent alumni identifying as a woman. WE Innovate challenges the perception of what a science entrepreneur looks like and provides enterprising women with inspiration, community and practical tools for success.

Hosted by Imperial Enterprise Lab, the programme helps participants to develop their entrepreneurial and leadership skills and early-stage business ideas through:

- Masterclasses
- Business coaching
- Peer mentoring
- Networking with investors, industry and women business leaders
- The chance to win a share of a £30,000 prize fund.

Our impact

£

£3.2M

in funding raised by
WE Innovate alumni

“ ”

It was so helpful in taking my idea (i.e. my research) and growing it. I wouldn't have been able to do so without this programme.

“ ”

I really enjoyed everything about this programme. Every masterclass was extremely helpful: I learned so much about the entrepreneurship world in such a small amount of time.



More than **59**
women-led ventures
incorporated



17

external awards won



More than
300
women supported

WE Accelerate: stepping up

Through our work on WE Innovate, some further challenges were identified that need addressing to help propel women-led businesses forward.

- There is a significant drop-off in support for entrepreneurs at pre-seed stage
- Women's average starting capital is 50% less than men.

Our brand-new programme, WE Accelerate, responds to these findings and helps bridge the gap in support between pre-accelerator and seed stage.



WE Accelerate is for women and women-led teams who have already taken part in a pre-accelerator or accelerator, many of whom will have won some funding, undertaken customer validation and developed a prototype.

Open to Imperial alumni and non-alumni, this year-long programme helps participants prepare to raise seed-funding, offering access to advanced scale-up masterclasses, funding and tailored expert support.


Alongside WE Accelerate, we are developing:

- The WE Online Academy, an online resource for women founders across the UK
- An annual WE Stakeholders Conference for entrepreneurs, policy makers and other key partners.



Meet Marine Valton
Founder of Bio-F Solutions

As a PhD student at Imperial, Marine came up with the idea for Bio-F Solutions – a business that produces sustainable bio-fertilisers from algae, providing cost-effective and eco-friendly alternatives to traditional fertilisers. Marine developed her idea on the 2019 WE Innovate programme and has also won the EIT Food Global Venture Programme and the EIT Food Entrepreneurship Prize.

 [Hear from Marine in this short video.](#)



Powered by Philanthropy

Philanthropic support is vital to the success of our programmes and helps us broaden our reach. Our supporters give fuel to our shared mission to close the gender gap in science and business. Will you join us?

£375k over three years will support 75 women-led teams on the WE Innovate programme.

£300k will set up and run the WE Online Academy for three years.

£280k a year over three years will support 30 women-led teams on the full WE Accelerate programme.

£150k will support five teams on a WE Accelerate pilot programme for one year.

£60k will fund one WE Stakeholders' Conference.

Imperial
Enterprise Lab
WE Innovate

There are many ways in which your donation can make a difference, from growing the WE Innovate programme, to helping develop WE Accelerate, to providing extra engagement opportunities and online resources for women around the world.

If you are interested in supporting a leading women's enterprise programme, we would love to have a conversation and learn more about your priorities.

Please contact Sarah Ranchev-Hale:

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